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Information Management: Records
Management

Mail Facility Security and Handling Suspicious Mail

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SUMMARY of CHANGE

DA PAM 25-52

Mail Facility Security and Handling Suspicious Mail

This new Department of the Army pamphlet--

- o Provides information regarding inspection and security of U.S. Army mail facilities (secs II and III).
- o Provides critical procedural information regarding suspected bombs, suspected contraband, and suspected anthrax and other chemical and biological agents (sec IV).
- o Provides checklist items regarding security, training, and handling procedures for suspicious mail (sec V).

FOREWORD

Our world changed on 11 September 2001 and has continued to change. One area of concern today is the mail. We must become more vigilant in our efforts to protect all personnel from anything that could cause harm that might be received through the mail system. This pamphlet has been developed to serve as a guide for the various mail functions and operations of mailroom facility personnel and all personnel opening mail.

It is the responsibility of everyone to become familiar with these procedures and preventive measures. While it is understood that each mail facility may be unique, these procedures can be used to develop individual guidance; however, some of these procedures will not change, no matter what the circumstances, and all mail facilities should disseminate this information to all personnel. Some examples of unique facilities or situations would be where the United States Postal Service delivers to cluster boxes at barracks and to individuals living on post in family quarters and where mail is picked up directly from United States Postal Service facilities by unit mail clerks in the continental United States. Some mail facilities do not have the Defense Protective Service at their disposal as in the case of the Pentagon in Washington, DC. In these cases, contact military police or local law enforcement authority. The Defense Protective Service is the local law enforcement agency in the Pentagon.

Although the procedures in this pamphlet are considered prudent for most locations, it is not the intent of this pamphlet to compel commanders to redirect the use of their resources to purchase x-ray and other equipment if they do not feel it is warranted for their particular location and circumstance. Each commander should assess the threat and allocate resources accordingly. In some instances, commanders may determine that even more stringent measures are required than those suggested in this publication.

When considering purchases of x-ray equipment, ensure that equipment is large enough to handle letters, flats, and packages. Ask vendors or manufacturers about the capabilities of an x-ray unit, what it will and will not pick up on the monitor as mail moves through the unit.

Because the anthrax portion of this pamphlet is relatively new to most of us, information could change from time to time. At this time, it contains the most up-to-date information from the Army Surgeon General and other medical experts in the field of biochemicals, including anthrax. In case of a change, we will notify you immediately. This information should be disseminated to all personnel within your area of responsibility. On-line training is available from the General Services Administration Web site at www.gsa.gov/Portal/home.jsp. Personnel may register for this training on-line. The class title is, "How to Respond to an Anthrax Threat in a Mail Center."

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Information Management: Records Management

Mail Facility Security and Handling Suspicious Mail

By Order of the Secretary of the Army:

ERIC K. SHINSEKI
General, United States Army
Chief of Staff

Official:



JOEL B. HUDSON
Administrative Assistant to the
Secretary of the Army

History. This publication is a new informational pamphlet.

Summary. This publication provides current information regarding mail facilities operations and security, suspicious

mail, and the anthrax and other chemical and biological threats.

Applicability. This informational pamphlet applies to mailroom facilities and all personnel opening mail for the Active Army, the Army National Guard of the United States, and the United States Army Reserve. During mobilization, procedures in this publication may be modified by the proponent.

Proponent and exception authority. The proponent of this informational publication is the Administrative Assistant to the Secretary of the Army. The Administrative Assistant has the authority to approve exceptions to this pamphlet that are consistent with controlling law and regulation. The proponent may delegate the approval authority, in writing, to a division chief within the proponent agency in the grade of colonel or the civilian equivalent.

Suggested Improvements. Those who

use this informational pamphlet are invited to send comments and suggested improvements on DA Form 2028 (Recommended Changes to Publications and Blank Forms) directly to the Administrative Assistant to the Secretary of the Army, ATTN: SAAA-IT-IM-CR, 6602 Army Pentagon, Washington, DC 20310-6602.

Distribution. This publication is available in electronic media only and is intended for command levels C, D, and E for Active Army, Army National Guard of the United States, and the United States Army Reserve.

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Section I

About this Procedural Guidance

1. Purpose

This pamphlet provides up-to-date procedural guidance regarding U.S. Army mail facility security and suspicious items, including anthrax and other chemical and biological agents.

2. References

Required and related publications and prescribed and referenced forms are listed in appendix A.

3. Abbreviations and terms

Abbreviations and special terms used in this pamphlet are explained in the glossary.

Section II

Mail Facility Inspections

1. Procedures for inspecting mail facilities

a. All major Army command (MACOM) official mail managers should perform inspections of all official mail and distribution centers/mail facilities within their areas of responsibility, annually if possible and every 3 years as a minimum. MACOM commanders may require installations to perform a self-inspection annually and forward the results through command channels to the MACOM.

b. Unit mailrooms are required to be inspected quarterly by the installation postal officer or serving postal officer (outside continental United States (OCONUS)).

2. Checklist for suspicious mail

Procedures for suspicious mail should be added to all checklists that are being used for inspections. This information pamphlet may be used as a guide in that development. Suggested checklist items for suspicious mail are included in section V of this pamphlet.

Section III

Security of Mail Facilities

1. Procedures for securing mail facilities and equipment

a. All entrances to mail facilities must be secure from unauthorized personnel.

b. Post signs, "AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL ONLY," on all entrances to a mail facility.

c. All entrances to mail facilities should be secured at night. Checklist SF 701 (Activity Security Checklist) is used for recording the closure.

d. Mail facilities with vault areas must keep their doors secured at all times and service customers through a window-type enclosure that can be secured at night against entry. Use SF Form 702 (Security Container Check Sheet) to fill in the time of opening and closure of vaults. Closing and securing must also be verified on the SF Form 702, by a supervisor or an appointed representative, at the time of closure. More specific guidance on using the form may be found in AR 380-5 (Department of the Army Information Security Program).

e. Combinations to all doors and safes should be strictly controlled and limited to only those personnel with a need to know. Combinations should be changed annually or when personnel with the combinations retire or transfer.

f. Mail meters should be in a locked container when not in use. Mail meter keys should not be left in the meter during the day when left unattended. The extra meter key should be secured in a different area from the key that is used everyday. See AR 25-51 (Official Mail and Distribution Management) for more specific guidance regarding the securing of meters and keys.

2. Emergency evacuation plan

Every mail center or facility should have an emergency evacuation plan and have it posted. Evacuation should be practiced regularly.

Section IV

Physical Security Threats (Explosives/Contraband/Anthrax/Other Chemical and Biological Agents)

1. Detection of explosives

a. The best method and the method typically used to detect explosive devices in mail is for all mail to be x-rayed before sorting, delivery, or preparation for pick-up by addressees. In some locations, this is not feasible. In those cases, all other security procedures in this publication should be followed diligently.

b. If x-ray units are used, it is preferred that they be located outside buildings, but when this is not feasible, an x-ray unit should be in each building that receives mail directly from the United States Postal Service and authorized private, commercial, and independent carriers.

c. In some cases, authorized private, commercial, or independent carriers may make delivery of mail directly to the addressees in a building. Others such as the Defense Courier Service and agency couriers may also come to deliver directly to addressees in a building. Procedures should be put in place to have all mail x-rayed before the carrier personnel proceed with deliveries. A central mail facility within a building, with x-ray capability, no matter where it is located or what customers are served, should x-ray all mail for the building in which it is located unless the building is providing x-ray service.

d. There is no need to x-ray outgoing mail in most cases; however, there is a Department of Defense/Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) agreement with regard to this OCONUS. The agreement states that when the FAA issues a credible threat, outgoing/retrograde mail from OCONUS Army postal facilities would be required to be x-rayed or be opened for inspection prior to being mailed. All personnel should consider their own unique circumstances.

e. Personnel using x-ray equipment should receive training to recognize what they are seeing on the x-ray monitor. The untrained eye can miss important clues.

2. Telephonic bomb threats

When a bomb threat is received, the following procedure should be followed:

- a.* Remain calm.
- b.* Note down on paper the exact wording of the threat.
- c.* Without alerting the caller, signal a co-worker to contact either the military police or the local law enforcement authority, depending on which one is available. (Keep their numbers near the telephone at all times.)
- d.* Attempt to keep the caller on the line as long as possible.
- e.* Try to obtain from the caller as much of the below noted information as possible. Use the information below to create a worksheet for bomb threats and maintain it near each phone.
 - (1) When is the bomb going to explode?
 - (2) Where is it right now?
 - (3) What does it look like?
 - (4) What kind of bomb is it?
 - (5) What will cause it to explode?
 - (6) "Did you place the bomb?"
 - (7) Why?
 - (8) What is your address?
 - (9) What is your name?
- f.* Try to ascertain the following with regard to the caller:
 - (1) Sex.
 - (2) Race.
 - (3) Age.
- g.* Try to observe the following about the caller.
 - (1) Characteristics of the caller's voice (for example, calm, angry, distinctive accent, slurred, incoherent, foul, and so forth).
 - (2) Background noise (for example, street noises, music, machinery, and so forth).
 - (3) Note the number the caller called, the exact time and date of the call, and the length of the call.
 - (4) Immediately turn over all materials to military police or a local law enforcement agency and take further instruction from them.

3. Procedures for suspicious packages

All personnel should have procedures in place for suspicious items. Coordinate the procedures with military police, the local law enforcement agency, or your security office, whichever is applicable. In the event a suspicious package is received during any phase of the receiving operation, whoever discovers the item should do the following:

- a.* Leave the questionable article where it is and do not touch or attempt to remove it. Under no circumstances attempt to open the package.
- b.* Immediately notify your supervisor or the supervisor's designated representative.
- c.* The supervisor should immediately evacuate the working area of the mail facility and the immediate offices around the mail facility.
- d.* The supervisor should call the military police or local law enforcement agency applicable to the activity.
- e.* Post personnel at a safe distance, but near, all entrances and exits to stop all entry to the mail facility.

f. Ensure that the suspicious article remains where it was discovered and that the area remains cleared of personnel until the military police or your local law enforcement agency assumes responsibility for the area.

g. Prepare a written report regarding the incident as soon as possible after turning the area over to your local law enforcement authority. Answer the essential questions of who, what, when, where, and why. This report should go to your division chief and security officer, and they, in turn, should notify appropriate upper level personnel.

4. Bomb identification

To help identify possible threats, mail personnel should be aware of the following characteristics of mail bombs and explosive devices:

- a. Foreign mail. (During 1997, numerous mail bombs received in the DC area had an Egyptian return address for Alexandria, Egypt.)
- b. Unusual or unfamiliar restrictive markings (odd or non-standard markings that read “Confidential,” “Personal,” and so forth).
- c. Excessive postage.
- d. Handwritten or poorly typed address.
- e. Incorrect titles.
- f. Title, but no names.
- g. Misspellings of common words.
- h. Oily stains, discolorations, or substances leaking from the package.
- i. No or illegible return address.
- j. Unusual or excessive weight for size of package.
- k. Rigid envelope.
- l. Lopsided or uneven envelope.
- m. Protruding wires or tinfoil.
- n. Excessive securing material such as masking tape, string, tape, and so forth.

5. Suspected contraband

If a package suspected to be containing contraband is encountered during the x-ray phase of the receiving operation, mail personnel should refer the package immediately to the supervisor’s attention. Supervisors should make a determination as to whether the contents merit contacting the local law enforcement agency and/or the security office. See the United States Postal Service Domestic Mail Manual, chapter C, for more detail with regard to descriptions of contraband items. Examples of contraband follow:

- a. Items that appear to be actual weapons (for example, pistols, M–16s, hand grenades, claymore mines, and so forth). However, there are circumstances, as outlined in the United States Postal Service Domestic Mail Manual, section C024.1.3, in which the official mailing of pistols and concealable weapons is authorized.
- b. Controlled substances (for example, anabolic steroids and narcotic, hallucinogenic, stimulant, or depressant drugs).
- c. Drug paraphernalia (for example, water pipes, roach clips, hypodermic needles, and so forth).
- d. Dead animals in non-approved containers.
- e. Flammable liquids.
- f. Compressed gas containers.
- g. Poisons.
- h. Radioactive matter.
- i. Fruits and vegetables in non-approved containers.
- j. Biohazard materials.
- k. Knives or matches.

6. Suspected anthrax and other chemical and biological agents

Anthrax can only be detected through laboratory analysis or sophisticated detection devices. Although x-ray techniques have been effective in detecting explosive devices, present x-ray methods are inadequate to detect biochemical agents; therefore, it is important that all unexplainable powdery substances, of any color, in the mail be considered suspect and that the proper procedures for suspicious items should be followed. Anthrax spores have no smell or taste. Anthrax spores enter breaks in the skin, can be swallowed, or can be inhaled to cause the illness. Anthrax is not spread from one person to another. When contact with anthrax spores is discovered early, life-saving treatment is available.

a. *Symptoms and effects of inhalational anthrax—after an incubation period of 1–7 days.* The onset of inhalation anthrax is gradual. Possible flu-like symptoms include—

- Fever
- Malaise

- Fatigue
- Cough
- Mild chest discomfort followed by severe respiratory distress

b. Skin form of the infection. The skin form of the infection occurs most frequently on the hands and forearms. It is initially a small solid elevation of the skin, which progresses to a fluid-filled blister with swelling at the site of infection. The scab that typically forms over the lesion can be black as coal, hence the name *anthrax*—Greek for *coal*. With treatment, the fatality rate of anthrax infections on the skin is less than 1 percent.

c. Contact with mail. The following procedures should be followed to avoid contact with anthrax in the mail.

- (1) Centralize opening of mail to the extent possible.
- (2) Install air monitoring devices. (Check with security offices, which have direct communications with hazardous material (HAZMAT) personnel. HAZMAT personnel can offer information on air monitoring equipment and many other security measures that can be taken.)
- (3) If correspondence cannot be read without putting mail close to the face, personnel should use a magnifying glass. Putting a piece of paper received through the mail close to the face could allow inhalation of anthrax spores if there are any present.
- (4) All personnel handling or opening mail should wear protective gloves and shirts or blouses with long sleeves. The long sleeve garment will protect your arms from the powder. Gloves should be a strong, nonpowdery type. Some may be allergic to latex. Appropriate nonlatex gloves are available that are not porous. Personnel in mail facilities should wear protective masks in addition to the gloves. Masks may be commercially procured. Masks that carry a National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) rating of N-100 are recommended. Everyone should ensure that both gloves and masks are stocked in supply channels.
- (5) All personnel should look for suspicious mail by following the same procedures for bomb identification (para 4). Do not dispose of or handle this type of material further.

(6) A package or letter leaking a powdery substance should be suspect. When the powder is not evident to mail room personnel, the opener of the envelope or the package may be exposed.

(7) Gloves must be taken off in such a way as to avoid contacting the outside of the glove. Pull the glove from the top and, as you pull it off, let it turn inside out.

(8) After properly removing each glove, place each in a plastic bag and tie the bag up. These may be thrown away.

(9) After disposal of the gloves, always wash your hands and lower arms thoroughly. You may use ordinary soap and water. Be careful not to wash so vigorously that the water splashes. Gently but thoroughly is the best method.

d. Contact with a powdery substance. The following procedures should be followed if you come into contact with a powdery substance:

- (1) Remain calm, slowly put the suspicious item down, and notify your supervisor.
- (2) The supervisor should call military police or local law enforcement.
- (3) Turn off the building ventilation system if accessible.
- (4) Carefully and slowly remove each glove so that it turns inside out as you are taking it off.
- (5) After removal, put these gloves in a plastic bag, tie the bag up, and leave it in place for your local law enforcement authority upon their arrival.
- (6) Leave the room and close all doors. Stay at a safe distance near the room and ensure no one enters the room before law enforcement personnel arrive. Depending on your circumstances, it may be better to get as far away from the suspicious package as you can but stay inside the room and ensure no one enters except responding local law enforcement officials. This will ensure that no persons outside the room get the substance on them. To leave the room or not must be decided at the local level and by your circumstances.
- (7) If the decision is to leave the room, at the first opportunity, all persons who came in contact with the suspicious item should wash their hands and forearms with an antibacterial soap and water, again being careful not to splash the water.

(8) Provide a list of all persons who touched the contaminated mail piece to the law enforcement authorities upon their arrival.

(9) The responding law enforcement officials should call the local medical authority.

(10) The responding medical authority will direct you concerning showering, disposal of clothing, testing, and antibiotics.

e. Taking antibiotics. Taking antibiotics regularly in the absence of a review by a physician will cause harm:

- (1) Increased likelihood that the antibiotics will lose their effectiveness against the disease, and
- (2) Frequent side effects. (If you have concerns, speak with a health professional.)
- (3) Information on this topic will be updated periodically. Advice is available at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Web site at www.cdc.gov. Further advice with updates is available at <http://chppm-www.apgea.army.mil/homelandsecurity/default.asp>.

Section V

Suggested Checklist for Suspicious Items

1. Suggested checklist items

Below are statements that require “Yes” and “No” to be checked.

2. Item format

Items may be put in the form of a question if that matches a present checklist more appropriately.

1. Mail clerks have received postal training and handling of suspicious mail.
2. Mail facilities are secured from unauthorized personnel and “AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL ONLY” signs are posted.
3. Entrances to restricted areas are kept locked during operating hours.
4. Security container combinations are changed annually or when mail personnel retire or transfer (AR 380–5 (Department of the Army Information Security Program)).
5. An emergency evacuation plan is posted.
6. All mailroom personnel wear protective gloves with long sleeve blouses/shirts while handling mail.
7. All mailroom personnel are aware of the procedures for removing gloves and the method of disposal.
8. Mailroom personnel have informed personnel within their building about wearing protective gloves when opening mail.
9. Procedures are in place for handling mail bombs and anthrax or other chemical and biological agents.

Appendix A

References

Section I

Required Publications

AR 25-51

Official Mail and Distribution Management. (Cited in sec III, para 1f.)

USPS Manual

United States Postal Service Domestic Mail Manual. (Cited in section IV, para 5a.) The manual may be found on Internet site, <http://pe.usps.gov>.

Section II

Related Publications

A related publication is a source of additional information. The user does not have to read a related publication to understand this pamphlet.

AR 380-5

Department of the Army Information Security Program

Section III

Prescribed Forms

This publication prescribes no forms.

Section IV

Referenced Forms

SF 701

Activity Security Checklist

SF Form 702

Security Container Check Sheet

Glossary

Section I Abbreviations

FAA

Federal Aviation Administration

HAZMAT

hazardous material

MACOM

major Army command

NIOSH

National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health

OCONUS

outside the continental United States

USPS

United States Postal Service

Section II

Terms

This section contains no entries.

Section III

Special Abbreviations and Terms

This section contains no entries.

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